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For Immediate Release**FCC ELIMINATES OUTDATED, BURDENSOME PHONE COMPANY REGULATIONS*****Requirements Provide No Consumer Benefit, Divert Resources from Next-Generation Networks and Services***

WASHINGTON, April 12, 2019—The Federal Communications Commission today granted certain telephone companies relief from outdated regulations that no longer benefit consumers and increase compliance burdens, wasting resources that could otherwise be invested in next-generation networks and services.

These decades-old requirements date to an era when most consumers subscribed to separate, free-standing long-distance service. At the time, the “Baby Bell” companies were looking to enter the long-distance market, and Congress and the Commission were concerned that the Bell companies and other incumbent carriers would leverage their monopolies in the local telephone market to dominate the long-distance market. The communications marketplace has transformed since then, with consumers purchasing unlimited, “all distance” plans from a multitude of voice service providers.

In response to a petition filed by USTelecom, the Commission concluded that due to marketplace and regulatory changes over the past 20 years, these requirements subject only certain carriers to unnecessary and costly obligations with no offsetting benefits to consumers and competition. Using its authority under the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to forbear from enforcing rules and statutory provisions that are no longer needed to protect the public interest, the Commission therefore decided to:

- No longer enforce a burdensome rule that small, rural carriers set up separate affiliated companies to provide in-region long-distance service.
- No longer enforce unnecessary service provisioning deadlines and the related requirement that carriers submit reports about their legacy “special access” services.
- No longer enforce the redundant requirement that Bell companies provide non-discriminatory access to poles, ducts, conduits, and rights-of-way. This obligation remains covered by Section 224 of the Communications Act.

This Order does not address USTelecom’s additional request for forbearance from statutory provisions and Commission rules related to unbundled network elements and resale. That request remains pending, and the statutory deadline for Commission action is August 2, 2019.

Action by the Commission April 12, 2019 by Memorandum Opinion and Order (FCC 19-31). Chairman Pai, Commissioners O’Rielly, Carr, Rosenworcel, and Starks approving and issuing separate statements.

WC Docket No. 18-141; CC Docket No. 00-175

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